

Formative Assessment Project (FAP) Overview (1/27/09)

Purpose

The purpose of the Formative Assessment Project (FAP) is to develop teachers' capacity to frequently monitor the learning of all students and adjust instruction to better meet their needs. A 2008 CCSSO definition states that "Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes." Building on the extensive research on formative assessment and educator professional development, the project provides instruction in formative assessment strategies and techniques as well as creates small sustainable teacher learning communities (TLCs) in which participants learn and refine the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement and sustain formative assessment practices in their classrooms. This is done through the use of the ETS program "Keeping Learning on Track™." The project is further supported by a VT DOE facilitated online community for the TLC leaders.

FAP is an extension of a 2006-2007 pilot project involving nine schools and represents the continuing commitment of the VT DOE to support Vermont teachers in addressing and resolving student achievement gaps.

Link to School Quality Standards and Local Assessment

The VT DOE considers formative assessment (assessment *for* learning) to be an essential component of any comprehensive local assessment plan ([Core Principles of Local Assessment](#)). This same focused attention to equal opportunities for students, continuous progress monitoring, and professional learning communities that are central to FAP is mirrored in other concurrent statewide initiatives, including [Responsiveness to Instruction \(RtI\)](#) and Teaching All Secondary Students (TASS). Beginning in 2007, the Commissioner's Required Actions for schools in [School Improvement](#) required progress monitoring for students. Beginning in September 2009 schools in Year 2 of Corrective Action and beyond will be required to have all teachers in professional learning communities and the FAP model is one option for these schools.

Implementation Design

The use of the Keeping Learning on Track™ program offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) provides a consistency of language and training as well as integrity of process. Combining this program with the efficiencies of regional access allows us to offer valid and sustainable professional development. The VT DOE, in partnership with the [Educational Service Agencies \(ESAs\)](#), has provided training for approximately 500 educators and 60 TLC leaders over the past two years to extend the project beyond the original nine schools. Further questions about specific regional professional development opportunities related to the Formative Assessment Project should be directed to your local Educational Service Agency. For more general questions regarding the role of formative assessment in your school, contact information is listed on the following page.

Expectations and Requirements

Participating schools select 4-8 member teacher teams. Maximum benefit is achieved when teams are aligned horizontally by grade level and/or vertically by shared curricular focus to facilitate coherent discussion and instruction. All participants (including principals) complete a self-evaluation/needs assessment followed by a comprehensive three day summer training session. Certified KLT (Keeping Learning on Track) trainers present the relevant research basis and facilitate a variety of learning activities necessary to acquire and practice formative

assessment knowledge and skills. All participants leave the session with personal action plans to further refine or augment in the TLC process throughout the year.

Additionally, each team must have a designated leader to manage the convening, facilitation, focusing, and brokering of an active learning community. TLC leaders may be drawn from existing school or district leaders, or from other experienced professionals from outside the local school community. All identified TLC leaders must complete an additional 2 days of training prior to the start of the school year.

Subsequent to the training session, teachers are required to participate in an on-going learning community (TLCs) which includes a regular monthly 2 hour meeting facilitated by the designated TLC leaders. Meetings provide a structured opportunity for teachers to discuss and refine their formative assessment practices, acquire new learning, and revise their personal action plans. TLC leaders also participate in on-line threaded discussions that prepare them to focus and deepen the TLC dialogue.

Although schools are not required to collect formal data or issue summary results at the completion of the project, all schools are strongly encouraged to share results with stakeholders and develop plans for extension to the faculty at large.

Benefits: Strengthening Leadership for Learning

Teachers engage in sustained, job embedded professional development; the most effective means of increasing instructional effectiveness. Through TLCs, teachers draw upon each other's support and experience, focus attention on pedagogy, and share accountability for increasing instructional effectiveness for their students. Teacher leaders emerge through their involvement in the TLCs creating valuable internal resources for the learning community.

Principals are included in all trainings, required to secure time for TLC meetings, and expected to use a reflective classroom walk-through to endorse and support their staff's purposeful use of formative assessment to meet the learning needs of *all* students.

Students acquire and apply the five primary FAP strategies to assure that they will have greater opportunity to be more active, effective, and accountable in their own learning in the classroom.

Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), in collaboration with the VT DOE, provide coordinated professional development that would allow participating teachers to be eligible for graduate course credit and re-licensure.

Pilot Project Report

View the report of the [Formative Assessment Pilot Project](#).

Ken Remsen, Program and Training
(802) 828-5142
ken.remsen@state.vt.us

Carol Duley, ESA Coordinator
(802) 828-3843
carol.duley@state.vt.us

Arlyn Bruccoli, Teacher Leader On-Line Community
(802) 828-0223
arlyn.bruccoli@state.vt.us